

THE ENVIRONMENTAL MORALE LEAVE (EML) PROCESS

By: WO1 Arnold Guzman, Fires Brigade S-1 Shop

On behalf of all of the Soldiers in the brigade S-1 office, greetings: This month, I would like to explain the Environmental Morale Leave (EML) program, also known as Rest and Recuperation (R&R) leave. This program offers all Fires Brigade Soldiers an opportunity to take up to 15 days chargeable leave during their deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. It became effective after being deployed for 60 days and we already have Fires Brigade Soldiers participating in the program. The program ends 60 days prior to redeploying.

This is a government paid program that will take a Soldier from Iraq, to Kuwait, to one of the Army's three gateways which are Frankfurt, Germany, Atlanta, Georgia, and Dallas, Texas, and finally, to the Soldier's final destination whether its in the U.S. or overseas, and back to Iraq. Soldiers will not incur any ticket expenses during this process. Soldiers may elect to travel to anywhere in the world under this program, provided they have the proper documentation (i.e. Passports).

The EML process will begin at the unit level in Iraq, where the Soldier will fill out a Leave Form and get approval by the unit commander. On the scheduled day, the Soldier will be provided transportation to the closest airbase that flies to Camp Ali Al Salem, Kuwait. Once there, the Soldier will receive a briefing, and complete a trip itinerary with Sato Travel Agency based on his/her final destination. Soldiers will then fly to one of the three gateways before transferring to a commercial flight en route to their selected leave location in CONUS or overseas. Chargeable leave begins the day after the Soldier arrives at one of these three gateways. On the 15th day, the Soldier will return to the airport and begin the same travel process in reverse.

We all understand that sometimes there are emergencies that arise. If this happens while a Soldier is participating in the EML program, it is very important that the Soldier immediately notify someone in his/her chain of command so that an extension can be requested. Only the brigade commander can approve an extension for these cases. All Soldiers participating in the EML program will have emergency contact numbers on their Leave Forms before they depart Iraq. While on the topic of emergencies, one thing to remember about the EML program is that participation does not preclude a Soldier from taking Emergency Leave once he/she returns to Iraq.

It is both the 4th Infantry Division commander's policy and the Fires Brigade commander's policy to maximize participation in the EML program. Due to mission requirements and program constraints, some Fires Brigade Soldiers may not be afforded the opportunity to participate in the program. We are currently on track to meet a one hundred percent participation goal that extends throughout our deployment, which will allow all of our Soldiers to take some well-deserved time off.